

EXHIBIT 12
DATE 3-19-07
SB 478

TESTIMONY
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It is with great respect and honor that I offer my comments on Senate Bill #478 introduced by D. Weinberg. I respectfully thank Senator Weinberg for the wisdom, compassion and insight into addressing this alarming crisis especially in Indian country.

Our records indicate that Fort Belknap Indian Reservation has the highest suicide rate of all reservations in Montana. We are a rural, isolated community where the nearest psychiatric services for some parts of our reservation are up to 110 miles one way. This coupled with the lack of financial provider services through the Indian Health Services exacerbates an already alarming crisis. As with numerous communities, there is a stigma associated with mental illness and dual diagnosis. The services that are proposed through Senate Bill #478 can only serve to improve the crisis that exists within our community.

If I may make one suggestion, under New Section, Section 1. Suicide Prevention Officer duties 2 (c) (iv) I suggest the wording include "training that will assist providers to be more respectful, sensitive and caring to American Indian clients." Due to the stereotypes that are prevalent in Montana, training in this area would greatly assist an already traumatized population.

Thank you for listening to me. Gan aa hay aa!